



# NEWS RELEASE

## Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts

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### **President Endorses Senate Bill to Raise Pay of Federal Judges**

For the first time in more than a decade the President has announced his support for legislation that, if enacted, will be a major step toward restoring fairness to federal judicial compensation, Judiciary leaders said.

"The President and the cosponsors of S. 1023 realize that federal judges are not being fairly compensated," said Leonidas Ralph Mecham, Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts. "They have stepped forward with a proposal that will help ameliorate years of neglect." The legislation, introduced in the Senate last week, would provide a 16.5 percent pay increase to federal judges.

In introducing S. 1023 on Thursday, Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said, "The independence and quality of the Judiciary is at risk because of the inadequacy of the current salaries of federal judges." Hatch is one of nearly a dozen Republican and Democratic Senators who have endorsed the legislation.

The bill would provide a 16.5 percent pay increase for the Chief Justice of the United States, associate justices of the Supreme Court, and circuit and district judges, "an average salary increase of about \$25,000," Hatch said. The legislation also would provide for a pay increase for bankruptcy and magistrate judges, whose salaries are set at 92 percent of the pay of district judges.

During a White House ceremony Friday (May 9), President Bush thanked Hatch, saying, "I support your work to make sure we increase judicial pay across the United States."

Later in the day, the President released a statement saying, "I am pleased to support legislation introduced in the Senate this week that would increase the annual salaries of justices and judges of the United States."

Chief Judge Deanell R. Tacha of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit welcomed the proposed pay increase. "Judicial compensation is a crisis not just for the Judiciary but for the nation," she said. "When judges are forced by inadequate pay to return to the private sector, one of the cornerstones of our federal government is incrementally lost.

"Prior to 1990, only a handful of judges ever left the federal bench. Since 1990, over 70 Article III judges have left, and they have done so at an increasing pace," she said. Judge Tacha is chair of the Judicial Branch Committee of the Judicial Conference of the United States, the policy-making body for the federal courts.

The National Commission on the Public Service, chaired by Paul Volcker, issued a report earlier this year that recommends "an immediate and significant increase in judicial, executive and legislative salaries." The report said a "first priority in doing so should be an immediate and substantial increase in judicial salaries." Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, Justice Stephen G. Breyer, and Judge Tacha testified before the Commission.

Federal judges received no cost of living adjustment in five of the past 10 years. In addition, the purchasing power of judges' salaries has fallen by more than 20 percent since 1969.

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